

SAVE THE CITY HALL.

EX-MAYORS GIVE THEIR VIEWS.

PROTESTING AGAINST THE REMOVAL OF THE HISTORIC BUILDING.

MANY REASONS WHY IT SHOULD STAY WHERE IT IS—MAYOR GILROY OPPOSES NEARLY ALL HIS PREDECESSORS.

The articles which have appeared in The Tribune recently on the subject of the City Hall, in which the destruction of the beautiful historical pile was opposed, have attracted much attention, and many societies have followed the example of The Tribune and have entered protests against the contemplated step. The leading architects unite in saying that the City Hall is one of the most noteworthy structures of the city; they deem the erection of high buildings in the park a detriment to the city, and have no faith in the feasibility of such a plan; the physicians and students of hygiene say the City Hall Park is a necessary breathing spot, and all citizens who see in the building an architecturally beautiful relic with which are associated the names of Clinton, Seward, Marcy, Van Buren, Dix, Morgan, and other great men of New-York State, and who remember that beneath its shapely dome the last honors were paid to some of the Nation's most illustrious sons, say with The Tribune, "Save the City Hall."

"It would be an act of desecrating vandalism," was said recently of the measure. The archi-



DANIEL F. TIEMANN.

tect, the physician, the disinterested citizen, have given their opinions on the subject, and with a view to ascertaining their opinion on the City Hall question The Tribune has asked the ex-Mayors of the City of New-York and Mayor Gilroy: "Shall the City Hall be destroyed?"

A BREEZY TALK BY A. OAKLEY HALL.

A. Oakley Hall, who was Mayor two terms, from 1869 till 1873, was found at the Lotos Club and the question plumped at him: "Do you favor the destruction of the City Hall?"

"Certainly not, if you mean me, who have been called a City Hall man for fifteen years' service as District-Attorney and four years as Mayor; but if you mean the dear old City Hall that was built by John McComb, and is sacred to the memories of such Mayors as Clinton, Hone, Lawrence, Morris, Harper and Opdyke, and such Aldermen as David Graham, Henry E. Davies, Clarkson Crolius and Peter Cooper, I do not favor its destruction."

"Or the removal of its building uptown to be devoted to other than municipal purposes?"

"Nor that; I would keep it where it is, for the sake of its architecture and its associations and its adaptation to municipal uses. It is not generally known that a quarter of a century ago, when I was Mayor, the question of increased accommodations for municipal offices was mooted in relation to the capacity of the City Hall for official uses, and a committee of the Common Council, of which Boss Croker was then a member, was appointed to consider the subject. But the delicate question of jobbery was injected into the controversy, and I fancy that this dissuaded the committee from acting on the subject. I know that John T. Hoffman, who had just left the Mayoralty to become Governor, favored my views at the time that the City Hall should be added to by a new wing and front in Broadway and a new front and wing toward Centre-street—the fronts to be replicas of the existing architecture, with a court yard between the new erection and to the rear of the new County Courthouse Building. Several official

colleagues favored this, and the opinions of architects were obtained, who declared it feasible and compatible with the construction of buildings that would be architecturally ornamental and add to municipal pride. At that time the Postoffice was non-existent, and no point could have been made as to filling a park with buildings. I do not see why the idea of additions does not recommend itself now as in 1869. In any event, I should favor the retention of the existing building, which is ample for the accommodation of the Mayor and his bureau, and of the Boards of Aldermen and Supervisors—for whom and whom only the structure was intended."

"But you probably favor a Municipal Building in which all the departments of the city government could be collected."

"One building not necessary."

"Surely not. It is seldom that a citizen desires to proceed from one department to another in pursuit of business. He will have special concern with some one—say Finance, Police, Dock, Fire or Public Works Department. True, the offices of these are scattered, but they are accessible, and no complaint exists of difficulty in finding the officials. Moreover, in the present condition of local politics, I fancy that the massing of all the officials in a common centre might be inexpedient and not salutary to civic advantage. In this age of telephony and telephony or messenger service, locality is not of great importance in the transaction of bureaucratic business."

"I observe that objection is made to the city spending money for buying a site, but why not place the new building in Madison Square, fronting Broadway. But is that a centre? Perhaps in A. D. 1894. Yet the park was a centre in 1804—birth day of the City Hall. In 1850 Union Square was a centre. In 1904 Mount Morris Square may be a centre. But whether the present City Hall be extended or maintained as it is, or a new municipal building be erected uptown, the question is first to be considered whether it is inexpedient to leave the accommodations for the

city departments as they now exist. I do not hear of any confusion because they are separated in locality. Take Washington; is there confusion in its government because the White House and the Capitol or the various departmental buildings are more or less isolated? Our

as a City Hall pure and simple, if all other offices and sub-offices were removed, if it were set aside for the exclusive use of the Mayor and the Common Council, it would be amply large enough. Other necessary offices could be added as an annex in keeping with the present building."

"I see good reasons aside from these for preserving the old building. There is something more than business to be kept in mind when considering this question. The City Hall is a historical building; with it are associated many of the most important events in our city's history, and it is but natural that there should be a sentimental feeling in favor of its preservation. I know that a new building is considered by some an absolute necessity. If it be found that this is right, if more space is required than the old building and proposed wings and additions can furnish, if a new building must be put up, I would favor its erection elsewhere. In that event the old City Hall should be maintained as a monument to the times of its usefulness and it should remain where it is."

Mr. Grace is opposed to the removal of the building to any other site, and thinks that any attempt in that direction would be a mistake.

FRANKLIN EDISON SAYS "SAVE IT."

Ex-Mayor Franklin Edison, when asked if he favored the destruction or the removal of the City Hall, said: "If anything is to be removed from City Hall Park it should be the Postoffice."

It certainly does not belong there and I doubt if it ever did. It is far from beautiful, reflects little credit on the city, while the stable into which Mail-st, has been turned is a disgrace.

"As to the City Hall," continued Mr. Edison, "it should be preserved and if necessary en-

larged. The Stewart property could have been purchased during my term of office for \$225,000. Had this piece of property been acquired by the city at that time even at a higher figure it would have been a good purchase and the wisdom of the transaction would now become evident. Hugh N. Camp had the matter in charge at the time, and through him the city negotiated with the Hiltons and a satisfactory arrangement might have been arrived at, but the purchase, as you know, was not made. This land would give abundant room for all city and county offices, and the question as to the destruction of the City Hall would not come up."

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SMITH ELY.

present rentals are less than the interest would be upon the many millions to be expended for new constructions. It must be remembered that public buildings invariably cost more than similar buildings could be constructed for by private enterprise. Contractors and contractors possess human nature and all public treasuries are dilatory paymasters. I have failed ab initio to perceive the absolute necessity for constructing a new City Hall. I did not admit the necessity when Mayor in 1869, but was of opinion that if one existed the plan of enlargement was the most politic."

"How, then, should a Tribune reader sum up your conclusions?"

"First, that no real necessity exists for a City Hall. Second, that the departments as now housed get along very well with business as it is. Third, that the present City Hall should be maintained and is ample enough for the use of Mayor, Aldermen and Supervisors. Fourth, that if further accommodation is needed annexes to the old City Hall—even if the Courthouse and old City Hall be joined by a middle building, lighted on east and west sides—can be provided. Fifth, that if a new building is required it can be erected in Madison Square without cost of site. Sixth, that annexes or new constructions will in the end cost nearly double any original estimate. Seventh,

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